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**CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NYAIC is Phenomenal Networking Source, Best
Information Clearinghouse, Says Onion Jelly
Maker Reaching Regional, National, Global
Markets**

by Kara Dunn

POTTER, NY: When the demand for a food gift created in her Franjo Farms kitchen in Potter, NY, grew way beyond family and friends, Allison Sacheli needed help adapting her onion jelly recipe for commercial production. That help came from the NY Ag Innovation Center (NYAIC), an initiative of the farmer-driven New York Farm Viability Institute, Inc. designed to help New York's agricultural and green industry producers realize farm-level success. NYFVI projects help farms through projects to increase sales, improve business planning and production efficiencies, and increase consumer demand for NY farm products in local, national and global markets.

Dr. Olga Padilla-Zakour, a NY Ag Innovation Center food processing specialist, offered a commercial canning course that was perfectly scheduled for Allison. "The timing of the course was serendipitous," she says. "I could not have done without it or the Ag Innovation Center consultants. There would not have been another, or a less expensive, way for me to set up the required processing protocol and to navigate the necessary licensing paperwork so easily."

"Dr. Padilla-Zakour and her team are the best clearinghouse for any information you may possibly need. The networking they facilitate is phenomenal. They can quickly tell you who to call to arrange the required commercial kitchen inspection and FDA (federal Food & Drug Administration) and New York State Ag and Markets licensing. The NY Ag Innovation Center consultants are always my first call," she says.

Allison began making onion jelly in 2000 using some of the 9.5 million pounds of onions the family grows at Franjo Farms as a Father's Day gift for her father-in-law Tony Sacheli. In light of the popularity of pepper jellies, Tony had been teasing Allison about making onion jelly. Allison packaged the gift using a label featuring family patriarch Luciano Sacheli who had started onion farming in Elba, NY, in the

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Allison Sacheli processing onion jelly in her farmstead kitchen.



Allison Sacheli at the Canandaigua Farmers Market.

1950s.

The jelly soon found favor with family and friends who shared it with others, sparking local demand for the product. Allison began selling Luciano Sacheli's Onion Jelly at the Canandaigua Farmers Market. Regional retailers asked to carry the product; customers asked for other flavors. Finger Lakes vacationers returned home and soon 35 of their hometown specialty shops across the U.S. called Allison for samples and shipments of her eight different products.

In addition to helping Allison develop an approved process for commercial food handling and packaging, the NYAIC consultants also helped her find a source for jars and labels that Allison designed with Sacheli family members' names and faces.

In the last year the Internet has drawn worldwide demand such that Allison, the mother of three young children, anticipates asking the NYAIC consultants for assistance in locating a co-packer, who will process and package under Alison's private label. NYAIC consultants are ready with a list of possibilities and tips on developing a co-packing relationship.

"Through the Ag Innovation Center, entrepreneurs like Allison have access to a variety of resources to assist them in the development of value-added farm products," says Dr. Padilla-Zakour. "We can provide assistance with regulatory compliance, evaluation of safety and quality issues, scaling up from kitchen to commercial production, process development, equipment, packaging and ingredients recommendations, and specialized training."

The value-added production assistance from NYAIC has helped Franjo Farms extend its selling season beyond the September to April timetable. Allison says, "Selling onion jellies year-round is an enterprise that allows the farm to produce a value-added income during the months we are not selling fresh or storage onions."

For more information about the New York Farm Viability Institute, Inc., its NY Ag Innovation Center and its grants programs, go online to www.nyfarmviability.org or call 315-453-3823. The Institute is located at 159 Dwight Park Circle, Suite 104, Syracuse, NY 13209.

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